

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6046

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JA, XB, XP

SUBJ: JAPAN'S ROLE IN ASIA: GOJ ASIA AMBASSADORS' CONFERENCE

SUMMARY: DURING OCT 14-17 CONFERENCE IN TOKYO ON "JAPAN'S ROLE IN ASIA" OF GOJ ASIAN AMBASSADORS, ENVOYS EMPHASIZED NECESSITY FOR COUNTERING MAJOR PROBLEMS CAUSED BY JAPAN'S MASSIVE ECONOMIC PENETRATION OF OTHER ASIAN NATIONS. WHILE MOST ENVOYS RULED OUT ACTIVE POLITICAL ROLE FOR JAPAN IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE, THEY AGREED JAPAN SHOULD WORK TOWARD DEVISING CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM WHICH WOULD LESSEN IMPACT OF FLUCTUATIONS IN JAPANESE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES ON OTHER ASIAN ECONOMIES AND, THEREFORE, ON POLITICS OF COUNTRIES INVOLVED. CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT EMERGED FOR VIEW THAT JAPAN SHOULD STRIVE FOR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, INDIRECTLY, BY MOLDING PRINCIPLED AND CONSISTENT FOREIGN POLICIES. THOUGH STILL GROPING FOR SOLUTION TO DILEMMA CAUSED BY JAPAN'S VAST ECONOMIC INFLUENCE, FONOFF IS ENGAGED IN SERIOUS AND CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE TO STRUCTURE MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY FRAMEWORK OF RELATIONS WITH OTHER ASIANS. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING IS BASED ON DISCUSSIONS WITH FONOFF REGIONAL DIV DIRECTOR SAIKI, WHO MANAGED CONFERENCE, AND FONOFF ASIAN DIVISION OFFICIALS.

2. AT OPENING SESSION, FONMIN KIMURA TOLD ENVOYS JAPAN BASICALLY SOUGHT TO BUILD STABILITY OF ASIA AS AN ASIAN NATION SINCE ASIAN PROBLEMS SHOULD BE SOLVED BY ASIANS. ALTHOUGH CONFRONTATION WAS BEING REPLACED BY DIALOGUE, DESTABILIZING FACTORS STILL ARE APPARENT. KIMURA INSTRUCTED ENVOYS TO REVIEW JAPAN'S ROLE, AND DISCUSS MEASURES AND POLICIES WHICH COULD IMPROVE JAPAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN NATION-BUILDING.

3. FONOFF TOLD US ENVOYS AGREED MAJOR PROBLEM FACING JAPAN IN ASIA WAS FINDING MEANS TO COUNTER PROBLEMS CREATED BY MASSIVE JAPANESE ECONOMIC PENETRATION OF OTHER ASIAN NATIONS. MANY POINTED OUT GOJ HAD FAILED TO ESTABLISH CONSISTENT AND SUITABLE POLICIES ON ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. AS IN PREVIOUS ANNUAL CONFERENCE, PARTICIPANTS GENERALLY AGREED THAT IT WAS STILL PREMATURE FOR JAPAN TO EXERT SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL ROLE IN ASIA. ENVOYS AGREED JAPAN DOES NOT YET HAVE SUFFICIENT CONFIDENCE TO UNDERTAKE POLITICAL INITIATIVES. FOR TIME
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BEING EMPHASIS SHOULD CONTINUE ON BUILDING MORE COOPERATIVE AND FRENDLY RELATIONS WITH OTHER ASIANS BY HELPING IN THEIR NATION-BUILDING EFFORTS.

4. SAIKI DESCRIBED TO US POLICY PROPOSALS BY THREE AMBASSADORS PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED DURING CONFERENCE. (A) ONE AMBASSADOR ADVOCATED THAT JAPAN PROPOSE TALKS WITH PHILIPPINES FONMIN ROMULO AND INDONESIA'S MALIK FOR JOINT EFFORTS IN FOLLOW-

ING THREE AREAS: PEACE IN INDOCHINA; SE ASIAN NEUTRALITY; DEVELOPMENT OF BROADER ASSOCIATION OF ASIAN STATES TO CONSULT ON AND EVENTUALLY DEAL WITH ASIAN PROBLEM AREAS. PROPOSAL WAS VIGOROUSLY REJECTED BY CONFEREES WHO GENERALLY FELT AN ACTIVIST ROLE BY JAPAN NOW WOULD AROUSE ANXIETY ABOUT JAPAN'S INTENTIONS AND RECALL JAPAN'S IMPERIALISTIC PAST. (B) IN A MORE CIRCUMSPECT ANALYSIS, ANOTHER AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT JAPAN'S ECONOMIC RELATIONS WERE POLITICAL IN A PROFOUND SENSE BECAUSE DESTABILIZATION IN ECONOMIC FIELD RESULTED IN POLITICAL REACTION. FOR EXAMPLE, BECAUSE OF SIZE OF JAPAN'S PURCHASES, SLUMP IN A GIVEN JAPANESE INDUSTRY, WHICH LED TO SHARP DECLINE IN TIMBER PURCHASES FROM INDONESIA, COULD HAVE DISASTROUS EFFECTS ON OVERALL ECONOMY OF SE ASIAN NATION. SIMILAR EXAMPLES OF EFFECT ON SE ASIAN ECONOMIES OF JAPANESE INVESTMENT, AID, OR TRADE SHOWED POWERFUL INFLUENCE JAPANESE DECISIONS MAY HAVE ON ECONOMIES AND THEREFORE POLITICS OF SEASIANS. HE STRESSED THAT POLITICAL WILL HAD TO BE MUSTERED IN JAPAN TO DEAL WITH SUCH PROBLEMS AS POLITICAL PROBLEMS RATHER THAN PURELY ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. HE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A MECHANISM FOR BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL CONSULTATIONS WITH OTHER ASIAN NATIONS TO AVOID OR LESSEN IMPACT OF CHANGES IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND RELATIONS. CONSIDERABLE APPROBATION WAS EXPRESSED FOR THIS ANALYSIS BY OTHER ENVOYS. (C) THIRD AMBASSADOR SURPRISED CONFEREES BY STATING CANDIDLY THAT JAPAN'S ME POLICY HAD NOT BEEN LAUDATORY AND HAD CREATED NO RESPECT AMONG OTHER NATIONS FOR JAPAN. HE PROPOSED THAT JAPAN CONCENTRATE ON DEVELOPING A NATIONAL CONSENSUS OF GOALS AND PRINCIPLES WHICH WOULD ENABLE JAPAN TO PURSUE A CONSISTENT AND PRINCIPLED FOREIGN POLICY. IF JAPAN SUCCEEDED IN THE ENDEAVOR, OTHER ASIANS WOULD NATURALLY TURN TO TOKYO FOR LEADERSHIP. SAIKI SAID OTHER ENVOYS WERE SHOCKED BUT APPROVED. FONMIN KIMURA VOICED STRONG SUPPORT FOR THIS ASSESSMENT.

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4. DURING SEPARATE DISCUSSIONS OF GEOGRAPHICAL AND BILATERAL MATTERS, ENVOYS AGREED THAT SERIOUS CONCERN WHICH WAS EVIDENT IN SEA ASIAN COUNTRIES AT A TIME WHEN JAPAN AND PRC ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS THAT TWO MIGHT ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH HEGEMONY OVER SE ASIA HAS NOW DISSIPATED. ENVOYS AGREED PRC PROFILE IS LOW IN INDOCHINA BECAUSE SOVIETS ARE RELATIVELY INACTIVE. SHOULD SOVIETS ATTEMPT TO EXERT INFLUENCE, PRC WOULD SEEK TO COUNTER AND WOULD BECOME COMMENSURATELY ACTIVE. ENVOYS AGREED DIALOGUE WITH PRC SHOULD BE STEPPED UP. NO CHANGE IN INDOCHINA POLICY WAS PROPOSED.

5. IN HIGHLY SECRET SESSION (CLOSE HOLD), JAPAN'S POLICY TOWARD NORTH KOREA WAS DISCUSSED. ENVOYS CONCURRED THAT PRESENT POLICY SHOULD BE MAINTAINED. GOJ SHOULD TAKE NO ACTION WHICH WOULD GRANT OFFICIAL RECOGNITION TO DPRK BUT

SHOULD TRY TO EXPAND SPORTS, CULTURAL, BUSINESS AND PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE.

6. REGARDING US ROLE IN ASIA, DESPITE FREQUENT REPORTS WE HEAR FROM OUTSIDE JAPAN OF JAPANESE ANXIETY ABOUT US RETREAT FROM ASIA, SAIKI SAID QUESTION WAS NOT DISCUSSED AS SUCH, BUT AMBASSADORS ALL TOOK FOR GRANTED AND WELCOMED CONTINUED US INFLUENCE AND PRESENCE IN ASIA.

7. COMMENT: CONFERENCE DISCUSSIONS EXHIBIT AGAIN ACUTE FONOFF SENSITIVITY TO FOREIGN REACTION TO JAPANESE PRESENCE. JAPANESE ARE EMBARRASSED BY ECONOMIC SUCCESS AND POWER BUT ARE STILL GROPING FOR WAY TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM. TO THIS END THEY ARE CONTEMPLATING A FAIRLY DIVERSE RANGE OF POLICY OPTIONS EVEN THOUGH CONCRETE PROPOSALS ARE VAGUE AND EVENTUAL IMPLEMENTATION A QUESTION MARK. NONETHELESS, JAPANESE ARE ENGAGED IN SERIOUS DIALOGUE WITH THEMSELVES TO BUILD MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY RELATIONS WITH REMAINDER OF ASIA, BILATERALLY AND IN MULTILATERAL CONTEXT. END COMMENT.
HODGSON

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